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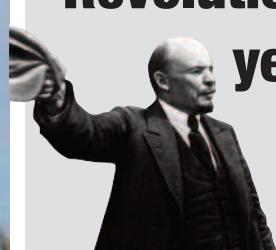
Catalonia: rights and unity



Solidarity argues that workers' unity requires support for national rights.

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Scottish Labour at a crossroads**

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Hariri resignation stokes up regional tension

By Simon Nelson

The bizarre resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri on Saudi state media has opened up another battleground between Iran and Saudi Arabia for regional dominance.

Hariri said his life was in danger, pointed the finger at Iran and by extension the Shia sectarian Hezbollah, one of his government's coalition partners. Hezbollah is backed by Iran and a vital component of the Assad regime's campaign to crush the Syrian opposition. Iran has now drafted in Hezbollah to help arm and train Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Hariri presided over a national unity government. His own party, the Sunni Future Movement, has strong ties to Saudi Arabia.

He has been viewed as the Saudis' man in the Lebanon. But his relationship with Hezbollah seems to have soured only recently, despite the fact that his father was assassinated by Hezbollah.

He had formed a coalition government with Hezbollah and had praised their efforts to keep al-Qaeda and other Sunni salafi groups out of Lebanon. He also supported the appointment of Michel Aoun, a Hezbollah ally, as President. Michel Aoun has refused to accept the resignation until it is made on Lebanese soil.

Hariri seems to have played a useful role for the Saudis in their rivalry with Iran. Both Trump and Netanyahu described the resignation of Hariri as proof of the growing and dangerous influence of Iran in the region.

Meanwhile Saudi Arabia is in increasing political turmoil after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched an "anti-corruption" campaign, arresting and de-



Saad Hariri

taining other princes, and current and former ministers on charges of corruption.

The main drive here will be to consolidate power for Bin Salman, who is also the chief architect of the war in Yemen — a conflict that pitches Saudi Arabia against Iran. Within the Saudi ruling family and state apparatus there are divisions on the conduct of the war and the growing tensions with Iran. Bin Salman is stamping his authority over the current direction of the state.

Increasing rhetoric from Saudi Arabia against Hezbollah was ramped up in the week prior to Hariri's resignation. Saudi Minister of State for Persian Gulf Affairs Thamer al-Sabhan said: "All of those who work and cooperate with it [Hezbollah] politically, economically and through the media should be punished."

Hariri arrived in Saudi Arabia, where he holds dual citizenship, and resigned. He has promised to return to Lebanon very shortly.

The fall out from these events will not be positive for anyone in the region.

Is Renzi heading for a lash-up with Berlusconi?

By Hugh Edwards

Recent regional elections in Sicily, with less than 50% voting, saw a close-run victory for Berlusconi's centre-right coalition, Forza Italia.

There was an unanticipated setback for the Five-Star Movement, although it remained the largest party with a 25% vote-share.

The Democratic Party (PD), currently in government in Rome, suffered a heavy defeat, and the so-called radical left bloc, MDP-SI-PRC, saw a modest improvement.

These results underline the decline of the once aggressive would-be Bonapartist project of PD leader Renzi split the social bloc of the centre-right, and steal the populist

thunder of Grillo's 5-Star outfit, with anti-Europe, anti-migrant rhetoric. These failures do not herald Renzi's immediate end — he still commands a majority in his party's national directorate and the just-approved new electoral law gives him full control of the party's electoral lists for next spring's national elections — but may well signal his party being consigned to also-rans.

Ferment and conflict within Renzi's party has forced him to concede to his critics the need to forge a new competitive and "radical" profile. But in what direction?

The PD's coalition partner, Alfino's AP, was wiped out in Sicily, so that speaks volumes of the consequences of an reliance on that

Kirkuk workers need solidarity

Muhsin Kareem from the Worker Communist Party of Kurdistan spoke to *Solidarity* about the situation in Kirkuk.

What has happened since the Iraqi army came into Kirkuk on 16 October?

The situation is not one of a complete occupation; the city is operating normally but people are very worried and many have left.

As winter draws in it will be increasingly hard to ensure there are enough stocks of kerosene needed for people are warm.

People are not starving but after wages were cut three years ago, anyone with savings has used them up. Workers from all communities, Kurds, Turkmen, other minorities, are concerned about the occupation by the central government and Hashd al-Sha'abi, who are on the outskirts of Kirkuk and under the direct control of Qasem Soleimani, who directs all of Iran's Revolutionary Guard operations abroad.

The Kurdish forces who were in Kirkuk cannot go back there, at least not armed. It is not a safe place for them. The people are now questioning what either of the main parties in Iraqi Kurdistan (KDP, PUK) can do to protect them.

Kirkuk is a so-called "disputed territory" outside of the Kurdish Regional Government's official control, but had been run by them since Daesh were driven out in 2014.

Kirkuk province is a multi-ethnic province. Turkmen, Sunni Arabs and Kurds live together and the Shia sectarian Iraqi central government, which is essentially controlled by Iran, is not their government. In Kirkuk people are being caught between the manoeuvres of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, who all want dominance in the region.

The whole region and Middle East is under a shadow of war as a result of this fight for dominance. After the events of 16 October, when the Iraqi government came



Life in Kirkuk is getting harder

into Kirkuk and took control, people feel the previous achievements of the referendum, and before that Kurdish control, have been pushed back.

What do people think about the role of the KDP and PUK?

Faith in the regional government is very low. The blockade has disrupted people's lives and access to goods and their families.

People expected the PUK and KDP to protect them following the referendum. Now people can see that they are divided and have more interest in their relationships with Iran and Turkey than in the question of the right of the Kurdish people to have the referendum recognised.

The day before the peshmerga retreated from Kirkuk, the KDP and PUK leaderships met with Qasem Soleimani, who told them that there would be a war if they decided to enforce the decision of the independence referendum. A day later they retreated, giving the Iraqi government the space they needed to occupy the area. Some of the PUK peshmerga did stay behind and fight but the rest of them retreated.

The situation is much worse in Tuz Khurmatu, 55 miles south of Kirkuk. There, Hashd al-Sha'abi have looted shops, expelled residents, killed and kidnapped civil-

ians. It is not known how or when they can return. Tuz Khurmatu is a mixed area of Turkmen and Kurds and a majority of the Kirkuk province voted in favour of Kurdish independence.

What are you doing to get recognition of the referendum?

At the moment there are no big demonstrations against the government. People remain in shock and also are not able to defend themselves against the Iraqi army and the militias.

Comrades are able to support people, provide advice on the situation and continue to call for support for the result of the referendum. We want to remove the government but we do not have a trigger like in many European countries where we can just do this.

Our party has a clear platform of demands and we need to build this up from the base. We want to organise groups of people across neighbourhoods, in hospitals, factories and other workplaces to demand the result of the referendum is respected.

Now we need political support from across the left, humanitarian groups, progressive organisations who will stand up for the result of the referendum and help us to fight both the government and the pressure from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

pact.

More than likely, success for a PD/FI lash-up, even if numerically achievable, would signal but the latest chapter in the decomposition of the ideological, institutional and political order of the country's rulers. And, ironically, at a moment when the hegemony of its bosses have never been stronger in the workplaces.

But such a coalition would not only see the collapse of their respective coalitions, but in turn set off a process of dynamic destabilisation in all the formations in relationship to their diverse bases of electoral support. This is already evident in the PD as it plummets everywhere, and inevitable in FI where a large slice of its elected members in the north, who owe their success to the voters of La Lega of Matteo Salvini, would have to rupture that historically crucial

Such a paradox defines well why Italy remains the weak link in Europe's chain of modern capitalism and why the eruption of Italy's working masses onto the battlefield of class struggle can, shatter to bits these historically congealed contradictions and the grotesque social order.

Tax the rich! Save the NHS!

By Gerry Bates

Simon Stevens, the chief of NHS England, is no socialist. He is a former top manager for a big US private-profit healthcare firm, an advocate of "market solutions", and paid about £200,000 a year.

Yet at a conference on 7-8 November he looked around him and said the waiting list for hospital operations could hit five million.

He said that the government must immediately grant the NHS in England at least £4 billion more for 2018-19 in the Budget on 22 November.

"If you think that Britain should look more like Germany or France or Sweden [than cuts-ravaged Greece or Portugal], then we are under-funding our health services by £20bn-£30bn a year".

He called on the government to deliver the £350 million a week — £18 billion a year — more for the NHS which pro-Brexit Tories implicitly named as necessary when they lyingly said that it could be made available by Brexit.

Brexit doesn't help get those resources. But taxing the rich would. Even on current tax rates, the PCS



civil service workers' union estimates a "tax gap" of £120 billion a year from avoided, evaded and uncollected tax.

A well-gunned tax system, digging into the tax havens, tapping the vast wealth of the ultra-rich, could yield more. More resources can be put into social provision if they are diverted from providing mansions, yachts, and baubles for the rich.

At the same conference, the boss of "NHS Improvement", an agency set up by the government itself, said the NHS would "pop" unless it gets the £4 billion in the Budget.

The King's Fund, the Nuffield Trust, and the Health Foundation jointly denounced "a projected funding gap of at least £20bn by 2022/23 based on the government's projected current spending plans".

"In the next months it will crumble"

An ambulance worker in Yorkshire spoke to Solidarity about the impact of the cumulative NHS cuts.

The ambulance service is the last port of call for many people. The impact of the cuts in social care, the cuts in council services, and the pressure on GP services, is felt in the ambulance service.

Our workload has gone up massively. Less than six months ago, our management did a complete rota change, which disrupted everybody, saying that would resolve the tensions of higher demand and workload. It hasn't at all.

Now the managers are just ignoring the rotas and calling people to come in to work even when they're off shift. They're continually pushing, working shifts out week by week or even day by day just to tread water. The flexibility we used to have for workers juggling childcare and other domestic problems has gone.

People are waiting longer for ambulances. The other day I went to an elderly lady who had fallen. It sounded like she had broken a hip, and she had. She was lying on the floor for an hour waiting for the ambulance. A couple of years ago we would have got there in 15 minutes, for sure.

And there are worse cases. You can be on your way to a job which sounds critical — usually for an elderly patient — and you'll often

get diverted somewhere else. The targets have been moved, nationally, so that response within eight minutes is now the target for a much smaller group.

At the hospital end, they've massively expanded the entrance hall to create a larger waiting area for A&E without having people in corridors. In the next few months, as winter sets in, the service is going to crumble.

Closures and centralisation of hospital services mean we have to travel longer distances with patients. There are lots of transfers between hospitals to get people into the right place for their treatment.

Some of this is justified by clinical evidence, for example the creation of regional trauma centres. But in many cases it's about lack of staff and funding, where A&Es, maternity units, and strike services have shut.

STRESS

Loads more ambulance workers go off sick with stress. Five years ago, say, you might have one or two people off sick with stress for a substantial period, over six months in an ambulance station with a hundred workers. Now it's six or seven.

Management bullying has escalated. And people are working on a maximum level all the time.

In this last year paramedics have moved into a different pay band, which gives us potential for bigger pay rises, but that hasn't stemmed the flow of people leav-

ing the job.

When I became a paramedic, in 2005, it was a job which people just didn't leave. I remember a manager arriving and saying that the trouble with the ambulance service was that there wasn't enough turnover of staff.

They wanted more young workers, fresh out of university, more compliant with management. Well, they've achieved that, and now they want to stabilise the workforce a bit with the change in pay, but it hasn't done that.

We go to many people who have been given early discharge from hospital when it looks as if they weren't medically fit to be discharged, but have been pushed out because of pressure on beds — or who haven't got the social care they needed on discharge.

More and more, too, we are going to people who are medically fit and have social care, but just not enough for them to be able to cope.

At least in our area, several patient transport contracts have been brought back into the public sector because private contractors provided a very poor service — constantly late, taking people to the wrong hospital or the wrong address, leaving people in vulnerable situations, not calling emergency services when they should have done. And some didn't even pay their workforce on time.

Even the management have come to recognise that the use of private contractors there has not been beneficial.

Universal Credit: why are we waiting?

By Matthew Thompson

Although the Government ultimately ignored the 299-0 House of Commons vote, calling for a pause in the national rollout of Universal Credit, parliamentary and media scrutiny continues to focus on the punitive aspects of the policy, especially the six-week waiting period before any money is paid to people submitting new claims.

The new benefit has been gradually phased in across the country since 2013. It replaces six existing working age and in-work benefits by combining them into a single one. Reports have highlighted the extreme hardship being inflicted on people in the initial wait for benefit, in which many are now forced to rely on friends, family, charities and food banks to meet their basic living needs.

MPs will vote again on Thursday 16 November on a cross-party motion submitted by the Labour chair of the Department for Work and Pensions Select Committee, Frank Field, specifically on the waiting period.

Waiting periods have been used in the benefits system throughout the existence of the modern welfare state in Britain, since the early twentieth century.

Before now, these have only been for a few days, and were only for benefits intended to replace wages in case of unemployment or sickness.

For much of the post-war period benefits paralleled conditions of rising pay levels, full employment, trade union organisation of most major industries and widening social provision, especially in housing. Now we have very different general conditions for workers, and not only are waiting periods longer, but are also being imposed on

those without the resources. In the past those who became sick or lost their job might just be able to manage before benefits were paid to them.

The waiting period in the new Universal Credit regime represents an extension of the "conditionality" already present in the 2010-15 coalition government's "welfare reforms", especially in the now abandoned Work Programme, and before that the New Deal introduced by Labour in 1998.

FREE LABOUR

From then on the condition attached to benefit entitlement required the unemployed to undertake so-called "work-focused activity".

This was working for your benefits, either for voluntary/charity organisations or private sector employers eager to exploit free labour. Sanctions would be imposed on you if you didn't do that work.

The idea with Universal Credit is that by mimicking the payment of wages in monthly arrears you attune the unemployed and the sick to the rhythms of employment and thus make them more likely to find work. Essentially it means blaming them for the lack of decent, well-paid jobs and the dearth of support for those with disabilities.

With the divisions in the government between those seeking a hard or a soft Brexit widening, not to mention the difficulties besetting the Cabinet as a result of the personal behaviour of ministers, the Tories are on the back foot at Westminster.

Surely a determined and sustained drive by Labour can now push them back on this issue much further than even their own few dozen backbench rebels intend.

Free Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe!

By Charlotte Zalens

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British Iranian dual national, has been detained in Iran's infamous Evin prison since April 2016.

Nazanin was on holiday with her young daughter visiting family in Iran when she was arrested and charged with "plotting to topple the Iranian regime".

Despite having refused requests to meet Nazanin's husband and campaigners on her behalf for a year, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson publicly contradicted her reason for being in Iran claiming she was "training journalists".

Johnson's comments have apparently been used as evidence in a court in Iran, and Nazanin may now face a further 16 year sentence on top of her existing five years.

Nazanin works for the charitable arm of the Thomson Reuters news

agency, and used to work for the charitable arm of the BBC, BBC Media Action, which has links to a training course for the BBC Persian service. It is thought her arrest may have been due to these indirect links with the BBC.

BBC Persian service journalists report increased harassment by the Iranian authorities, and two months ago all the assets of 150 BBC staff, former staff and contributors were frozen for "conspiracy against national security".

Nazanin has been put in solitary confinement multiple times and there are fears for her health. Her three year old daughter remains trapped in Iran, being cared for by her grandparents. Nazanin's husband is in Britain, and only able to contact her sporadically.

Nazanin must be freed, and the British government should be doing all it can to help.

Marxism, not “Menshevik dogma”

Paul Vernadsky in his review of my book, *The Experiment: Georgia’s Forgotten Revolution 1918-21* (Solidarity 453), is right to highlight the importance of this period for today.

And he comes to the heart of our disagreement at the very end of his essay when he refers to the idea that “an impoverished, backward society cannot skip historical stages.” He calls this “Menshevik dogma”. No, Paul, that’s not “Menshevik dogma”. That’s Marxism.

But leaving aside whether that’s more Martov or Marx, that phrase has proven to be absolutely true. The last century showed us many examples of attempts by revolutionaries — sometimes, but not always, well-meaning ones — to skip historical stages. (Think of China, all of Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea and Cuba.) In every single case, without exception, the result of skipping historical stages — mainly, skipping democracy — was the nightmare of totalitarianism.

Paul’s main charge against the Georgian Mensheviks is that they “could have remained part of Soviet Russia,” but chose not to. He makes this point several times in his short piece, chiding the Georgians for ignoring “the alternative of remaining with Bolshevik Russia.” This is a very basic historic error: Georgia was never part of Soviet Russia. Georgia had been part of the Russian empire, and remained very loosely connected to Russia during the months of the Provisional Government, but when the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917, the Georgians — like many other parts of the empire — re-

jected their rule.

Had they taken Paul’s advice anyway, and voluntarily joined what later became known as the “happy family of Soviet peoples” three years before they were forced to by the Red Army, how would that have benefited anyone in Georgia? For three short years the Georgians benefited from a largely free political system, had powerful trade unions independent of the state, and enjoyed the benefits of an agrarian reform that managed to avert the famines that were destroying Russia. Does anyone seriously believe that the earlier arrival of the Cheka, led in Georgia by the sadistic Lavrenty Beria, would have been a good thing?

(Paul describes that invasion in 1921 as a “mistake”, but it was not. It was a crime, a premeditated one, and Stalin and cronies were the culprits.)

TROTSKY

Paul’s over-reliance on Trotsky’s worst book — the one he wrote to justify the invasion of Georgia — means that he neglects to mention what we can now learn from the archives, things that Trotsky would not have known in 1921.

For example, the fact that the Georgians came extremely close to a shooting war with the British Royal Navy, which wanted to shell Georgian soldiers who resisted the armed provocations by Denikin’s White armies. The main British interest was in toppling Lenin, not in propping up small border states like Georgia, and relations between London and Tiflis were never warm.

Trotsky makes much of the killings of Georgian Bolsheviks, and Paul quotes this uncritically, though the source of the story (a Russophile British journalist) is not entirely credible, and later publications (including Zhordania’s) contest the truth of the story.

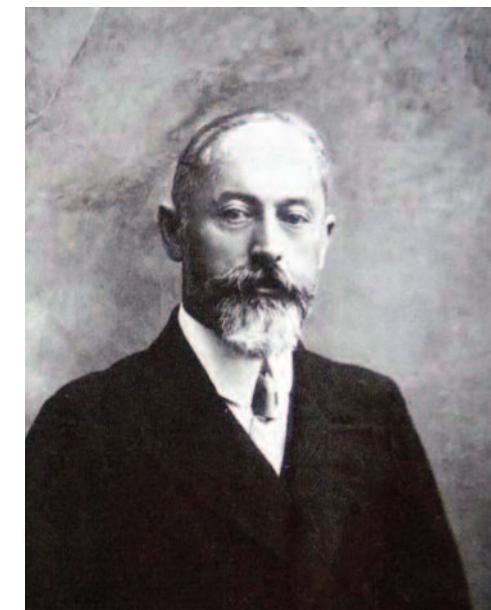
Paul makes only the briefest mention of Georgia’s free and independent unions, who get a full chapter in my book, and I understand why. For it is here that Trotsky appears in the worst light, in his campaign to bring unions in Soviet Russia under full state control. Trotsky’s proposals to militarise labour were so outlandish that other Bolshevik leaders, no fans of trade unions themselves, rejected them.

Paul also dismisses the success of Georgia’s independent cooperatives, neglecting the evidence that they were, in fact, gradually coming to dominate whole sections of the economy. This slow transition to a social democratic welfare state may not be as exciting as “war communism” but it also had far fewer innocent victims.

“This was no socialist paradise,” he writes, and he’s right. But the Georgians never claimed to be building a socialist paradise on earth. That was something Trotsky and the Bolsheviks claimed for Russia. The Georgians were much more modest in their aims, more realistic and more humane.

One of the biggest problems with Paul’s argument is that he writes as if it is 1921. The Bolsheviks are on their way to creating a wonderful new society. The Mensheviks have been consigned to the dustbin of history.

But a century has passed, and we now



Noe Zhordania, leader of the Georgian social Democratic Party

know things we did not know then. We know how the Bolshevik experiment turned out.

And we know that being consigned to the dustbin of history — a fate that Trotsky himself, who coined that unfortunate phrase, would later share with the Mensheviks — was not the worst thing that could happen to a political movement.

Eric Lee, London

Campaign for a referendum? No, campaign against Brexit!

I have never suggested that we should not oppose Brexit even short of socialism. Martin Thomas’s response (Solidarity 453) to my letter is a mixture of misunderstanding (deliberate or otherwise) and straw men. The argument between us is about how best revolutionaries carry out their propaganda to oppose Brexit.

Much of the propaganda we make has to continue with little immediate chance of winning the Labour Party to it. We call for the social ownership of the banks. Given we are unlikely to get Labour to commit to that, should we make propaganda for a national investment bank as the demand that is likely to be taken up? Or do we recognise our fight for social ownership will go on beyond the election? That to the extent our propaganda for social ownership is successful, we will push the leadership of the party to more radical proposals, short of our own?

The argument seems to be that our small forces cannot win Labour to the full programme, but we might win the leadership of the Labour Party to a referendum. Actually, in the current situation, we will have no decisive input on winning the Party to a referendum. What we do is make propaganda, and to the extent we are successful we will educate ourselves and the people around us about the appropriate politics, further we may over time shift the politics somewhat within the labour movement.

I restate that any referendum will not cen-

tre around any notion of our politics. It will be a choice between the EU as it exists or a terrible Brexit. To be clear, given that choice we are for the EU as it exists, but that is not our goal and we would not want the choice to be narrowed to those two options. Further, whether the Labour Party adopts it or not, we are not against a referendum, indeed on balance we are probably for it, but it should be no part of our propaganda.

If the Labour Party refuses to take up the demand for a referendum, what weight will our voice calling for a referendum have, outside it? Little.

Martin draws an analogy. He argues not to call for a referendum ‘would be like workers faced with a wage cut saying: we want our union to commit to socialist revolution. If we can’t win that in time... then we should not busy ourselves with crappy alternatives like low wages or even lower wages, but just grin and bear it.’

In fact a better analogy would be, a workplace where the boss has voted on wage cuts to avoid potential job cuts and the workers have voted for wage cuts. In the analogy campaigning for a referendum is like campaigning for another ballot, which simply offers existing wages or wage cuts.

We would support existing wages against wage cuts, but would we campaign for a ballot where these are the only two options? No.

David Pendleton, south London

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Catalonia: rights and unity

On Saturday 11 November, 750,000 people (on the city police's count) demonstrated in Barcelona to demand the release of Catalan government ministers and pro-independence association activists jailed by the Madrid regime to await trial on charges such as sedition.

A general strike called by a pro-independence union confederation, Intersindical-CSC, under the slogan "Defend Our Rights", on Wednesday 8 November, also had impact. The reports suggest it was more through demonstrators blocking railway lines and roads than the major concentrations of workers deciding to strike.

Intersindical-CSC is only the fifth largest union confederation within Catalonia, and the big Spain-wide confederations, CCOO and UGT, are stronger there. They have 85% of union members in Catalonia. Their stance (as reported in *Solidarity* 453) is to oppose the jailing of the ministers and activists, and Madrid's imposition of direct rule, but also to oppose the summary declaration of Catalan independence made by the Catalan parliament following the 1 October referendum.

That referendum got only a 43% turnout, mainly because of the Madrid government's attempts to stop and sabotage it, but opinion polls (and the voting figures in the 2015 election which produced the current Catalan parliament) suggest that still only a minority, though a large minority, in Catalonia back independence.

The Catalan nationalists have responded to Madrid's imposition of direct rule not by head-on confrontation, but by focusing on trying to win a majority in the new elections for the Catalan parliament to be held on 21 December.

Maybe impatient police actions by the Madrid regime, and heightened anger in Catalonia, will push things to a crisis before then; but for now the major political forces are focused on 21 December.

The Catalan government has not gone into hiding and declared itself still the day-to-day authority. Its ministers are in Spanish jails, or have fled to Belgium. (Moves by Spain to get them extradited are unlikely to finish their path through the Belgian courts before 21 December). Catalonia's police chief, arrested



after the 1 October referendum and accused of insufficient cooperation with Madrid's police action against the referendum, now says Catalan police should obey orders. Public administration is continuing normally.

Since these elections will be organised by the Madrid regime, and since before the imposition of direct rule Spanish prime minister Rajoy was recommending new Catalan elections as the way to resolve the crisis — at that point, the Catalan government refused — it will become very difficult for Rajoy not to back down in some way if the nationalists win a majority on 21 December.

Catalan separatism is not an arbitrary whim. Catalonia has existed as a distinct linguistic and often political unit since the early Middle Ages, with its distinct economic relations centred on Barcelona and the Mediterranean. The Spanish monarchy imposed thorough control, sidelining the old Catalan political institutions, only in the early 18th century.

There have been previous moves for Catalan independence, in the mid 17th century for example, and in 1931. Catalonia's national rights were suppressed under the fascist regime of Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1975.

Public use of the Catalan language was banned.

The case against independence is that Catalonia has won extensive autonomy since the end of the Francoist regime. It could almost certainly win more, maybe not under the current conservative government in Madrid, but in the medium term and without erecting new borders. In fact, one of the sparks of the current crisis is that a 2006 law extending Catalonia's autonomy, approved both by the Spanish parliament and by a referendum in Catalonia, was annulled in 2010 by Rajoy's PP government, using the constitutional council.

MIGRATION

A sizeable section of Catalonia's population today, especially of its working class and especially in Barcelona, has been formed by successive waves of migration from the rest of Spain and elsewhere, as Catalonia has become the most economically-dynamic part of Spain.

Respect for specific Catalan rights can probably be won without new borders; but new borders would have divisive and economically-disruptive effects in the working class, and might lead to the large "Spanish" minority in Catalonia and other migrants feeling hemmed-in and oppressed.

But it is up to the people of Catalonia to weigh those arguments. The decision should be theirs. Workers in Spain and across Europe should insist that Madrid and the EU respect Catalonia's right to national self-determination.

Curiously after so much turmoil, the latest opinion polls for 21 December show as little change from the last Catalan elections in 2015. The CUP, a left-wing Catalan nationalist party which advocates a larger independent Catalonia including parts of France and of Valencia, has gone up from 3 to 7 per cent, but all parties are on very nearly on the same scores as in 2015.

The top scorer in the poles is the ERC, a historic Catalan nationalist party with a broadly leftish tinge which dates back to 1931. In 2015 ERC ran in a bloc with Puigdemont's party, PDeCAT, a newer party which is right-wing, notorious for corruption, and historically hesitant about Catalan independence. Puigdemont wants the bloc repeated, but the ERC are saying no.

Rajoy's perspective must be to scare the

more tentative supporters of independence through his hard line, and persuade them that independence is too scary and risky. His line could work the other way: the crackdown may push people toward independence. From a distance, certainly, and maybe on the ground, it is impossible to tell which way it will go.

Rajoy's party, the People's Party, has been and is very weak in Catalonia. The big pro-unionist parties are the Citizens' Party and the social-democratic PSOE (called PSC in Catalonia). Citizens' is a socially-liberal, economically-neoliberal, Spanish-unionist party, which started in Catalonia primarily as an anti-separatist party, and which still has its headquarters in Barcelona, though it has now spread across Spain.

The balance after 21 December may be held by an electoral coalition of Podemos, a Spanish-wide leftish party coming out of the Indignados anti-cuts movement of 2011, and Catalonia in Common, the party of Barcelona's leftish mayor, Ada Colau, which is standing in Catalonia-wide elections for the first time.

That coalition has broadly the same stance as the big trade unions: it opposes direct rule and demands a proper referendum, but also opposes Puigdemont's declaration of independence. Catalonia in Common has broken its previous coalition with the PSC on Barcelona's city council because of the PSC's support for Rajoy's imposed Madrid rule.

There is some tension in Podemos about this stance. A survey of members got a majority for the line, but some Podemos MPs in the Catalan parliament voted for Puigdemont's declaration of independence, and the Podemos leader in Catalonia has resigned. The left-wing Anticapitalistas faction is for independence.

Looking back over the evolution of Spain and Catalonia since 1975, it seems likely that a very wide range of opinion would settle for an expanded autonomy for Catalonia within a united Spain, at least as an acceptable second-best. Although Rajoy currently rejects expanded autonomy, his hand may be forced on 21 December.

It is hard to see how the major bourgeois forces on either side can find a path from the current conflict to such an outcome. It remains for the working class and its movements to uphold the cause of solidarity, mutual respect, internationalism, and respect for national rights.

Our model on such questions was discussed at length in a long pamphlet by Lenin in 1913, summing up on many debates in the socialist movement of his day. The nation wishing to secede should have the right to vote on it; the main job of socialists, particularly those in the bigger power, is to argue for respect for the democratic choice. Lenin praised the Swedish workers' response when Norway separated from Sweden in 1905: firm backing for Norway's rights, while leaving it up to the Norwegian workers to decide whether autonomy was enough or they wanted independence.

Against Madrid's clampdown, for Catalonia's rights, and in all circumstances for working-class unity across the national and communal divides!

Capitalists demand planning

As well as from the left, demanding freedom of movement and social levelling-up, the Tory government is also under pressure from big business over Brexit.

Few bosses have come out for stopping Brexit. The big majority, though, are demanding a definite timetable and a long transition period during which Britain sticks to EU rules.

Their reasons are interesting in relation to long-running arguments between socialists and advocates of capitalism over economic planning.

Socialists want democratic economic planning. Pro-capitalists say that the only realistic way to run a complex economy is by following the "wisdom of the markets", tacking and turning as current demand and prices flow and ebb. Planning, they say, produces only bureaucratic nonsense.

Listen, though, to what the bosses say

about Brexit. Two years' time, they say, is "tomorrow" for big businesses. They have to plan and they do plan on a longer timescale than that. They make investments and strategic decisions which can only unfold over many years.

That is why they are demanding "certainty" from the Tories. They know they live in an unstable capitalist world in which slumps and crises can mess up their plans, but they insist on knowing at least the broad lines of what the government will do.

In fact complex economic life can be run only by planning; is run only by planning.

The difference is that today it is the "planning" of dozens of rival and contradictory plans, and all taking the profit of the ultra-wealthy as their criterion.

In a socialist society, it will be a single, though loose plan, democratically decided, and taking social welfare as its guide.

***Solidarity* 455 will be printed on 23 November, later in the week than usual, and *Solidarity* 456 on 5 December.**

Glory o, glory o, to the bold Bolsheviks

By Sean Matgamna

The Russian Revolution has had all sorts of things grafted onto the image it projects to us. But what was it in reality?

In the revolution, the workers and the farmers — and the soldiers who were mainly peasants — revolted against the ruling classes and the war. This was a tremendously democratic movement. It was a movement that created soviets, that is workers' councils. No powerful state made the revolution. It was the people, the workers, the red guards in St Petersburg and Moscow, the factory militias. What they thought they were doing was liberating themselves from all future class rule.

The Bolsheviks who led that revolution declared what they were doing as the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is a term we would hesitate to use today, as it conjures up totalitarian state rule. The Bolsheviks, and the workers who accepted the term — what did they mean by it?

Dictatorship was an institution that was sometimes put in control in the ancient Roman Republic. A dictator was elected in an emergency and had power to override vested interests. What Marx meant when he talked about the dictatorship of the proletariat — what the Bolsheviks meant, what the workers who had control meant — was a dictatorship of the people, who would override all the laws and institutions of bourgeois rule.

Much of that is buried in the account we get of the Russian Revolution. The revolution in 1917 was the most profound revolutionary and democratic transformation that there has ever been. It was a tremendously democratic movement, the most democratic movement on earth at that point. In other states, including the most advanced capitalist states, women did not have the vote. In England, for example, a very large number of men who did not fit the property qualifications didn't have the vote.

In Russia a great network of workers' councils covered the country. Delegates were elected to the councils by various local bodies, and those bodies had the right to recall their delegates whenever they pleased, or when they disagreed with what these delegates were doing.

The workers did determine what happened. At first, for example, after taking power, the Bolsheviks did not want to nationalise industry. They thought that was premature. Russia was immensely backward. The Bolshevik government nationalised industry in 1918, ahead of what they would have chosen to do, because the workers in the factories drove out the bosses and demanded the nationalisation of industry.

Our comrades in the middle of the last century used to say that the day the workers took power in St Petersburg was the greatest day in human history. People like Max Shachtman and James Cannon said that. We can't repeat that now, because when they said that, they thought something could be rescued from Stalinism. Sadly, we know better. There will be other tremendous great days in history.

But October 1917 was one of the greatest days in human history. It was one of the greatest manifestations of democratic power in human history.

What happened to it? The Bolsheviks took power. Then for a while they formed a coalition

government with a peasant party which probably had the majority support amongst the peasants, the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party. Then the revolutionary government was forced to make a peace with Germany, a wretched peace where Russia surrendered a great deal.

The Left SRs revolted against making a deal, quit the coalition, and soon after organised an insurrection against the Bolsheviks in July 1918. Over 1918, a counter-revolution organised. In September 1918, a leader of the Right SRs shot Lenin, trying to assassinate him.

The counter-revolutionary generals and admirals organised armies. They tried to make Russia into a military dictatorship. Generals had tried that in 1917 before the revolution. The Bolsheviks in 1917 believed that the only alternative to the workers taking power then would be some form of military dictatorship, and I think they were right about that.

After the revolution, military leaders and the bourgeois democrats organised revolts across Russia. No less than 14 countries intervened in Russia to help the Whites.

The civil war wrecked the country. The Bolsheviks had to fight back and create a new army (they had disbanded the old army in February 1918). Trotsky created the Red Army. They won the Civil War after some terrible years.

RUINED

At the end of the Civil War Russia was wrecked and ruined.

Production in the factories was much less than it had been in 1914. Large numbers of workers had been killed. The greatest slaughter of Jews before Hitler's Holocaust had been carried through by the Whites during the civil war in Ukraine. Vast numbers of workers had returned to their villages, because they were starving in the towns and cities.

In order to win the Civil War, the Bolsheviks had to create a hierarchical army. It was an army that was under the control of the workers, but nevertheless military need forced them to create a hierarchy and a command structure, and a heavy bureaucracy to organise food supplies for the army and the cities.

Didn't the Bolsheviks expect all that? No, they didn't. They thought that they could make a revolution in Russia, but also that Russia was so backward that you could not even imagine building socialism in it. The Bolsheviks acted on the belief that the revolution would spread, and their example would spread across Europe.

It did, to an enormous extent. There was a revolution in Germany in 1918 that got rid of the Kaiser, but the workers in Germany still looked for leadership from the majority Social Democrats who had become ministers of the Kaiser in the last days before he abdicated. Military gangs under the aegis of the majority Social Democrats killed many of the revolutionary workers and leaders. Rosa Luxemburg was beaten to death.

The Bolsheviks saw the Russian revolution as the first stage. In that they were right. The revolution did spread. Soviets spread to a number of places in Europe — to Germany, for example, though unfortunately the majority within the German workers' councils was held by the right wing Social Democrats.



Ireland was a very backward country. Yet in Ireland in that period, about three dozen small strike committees in dairy processing factories ran up the red flag during strikes and declared themselves soviets. Limerick is the third city in the 26 counties of Ireland. In Limerick the trades council declared itself a soviet. In 1919 it vied for control of the city with the British Army. It issued money, permits to travel and so on. It was defeated, again because of isolation.

There was a great movement, which inspired the imagination of all sorts of people throughout the world, but it didn't anywhere else succeed.

The Bolsheviks wanted to create a Communist International. In 1914 the old Socialist International had collapsed into chauvinism. Each party backed its "own" bourgeois government, sending workers to kill other workers. The Bolsheviks set out to recreate a viable socialist international.

The Communist International was proclaimed in 1919 and regrouped throughout the world who wanted to emulate the Russian revolution. The tragedy of it was that they were in the process of creating revolutionary parties in situations where revolutionary crises were already breaking on them, as in Germany in 1918. Everywhere the new Communist Parties proved too unprepared. The International was taken over by the ruling bureaucrats in Russia and destroyed.

The revolution was defeated in Germany. Step by step, it was defeated everywhere. Russia was left isolated.

Imagine a squad of soldiers scaling a ladder to attack a fortress. They go up the ladders, and then what if only one soldier manages to break through onto the battlements of the enemy and the others are forced to retreat? That soldier is doomed. That is what happened to the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik government was doomed because of its isolation, the ruination in the Civil War, and the poverty of the country.

The revolution degenerated, but not quite in the way the Bolsheviks expected. The Bolsheviks had thought they would be overthrown by the bourgeoisie and the rich peasants. That is not what happened. An element of the state officialdom, absorbing and merging with an element of the Bolshevik party itself, seized control and over time, bureaucratised everything.

In the 1920s the bureaucrats allied with the

new bourgeoisie which developed under the market-oriented New Economic Policy which the Bolsheviks introduced to revive the economy after the Civil War ruination. That new bourgeoisie was weak in absolute terms, but still powerful compared to the workers.

Eventually the bureaucracy gained the strength, solidarity, and confidence to kick aside the NEP bourgeoisie, and they created a Stalinist dictatorship. Yet that dictatorship vastly increased nationalised industry and collectivised the farms. It did those things with the utmost brutality and savagery, recklessly killing millions of people. That was Stalinism.

CONSOLIDATED

The people who consolidated the Russian revolution — the Bolsheviks — who were they? what were they?

Today, we get caricatures of what the Bolsheviks were. The Stalinists, when they took power, conducted a drive to "Bolshevise" the Communist International. In the course of doing that they bureaucratised the parties, and they made the Communist Parties throughout the world into servants of the Russian state.

That did not happen overnight or all at once. Various layers of Communist Parties in Europe, for example, initially sided with Trotsky in the conflict that broke out inside the Russian party. Nevertheless, Stalinism eventually triumphed in the Communist Parties. The revolutionary forces were reduced to very small numbers: the Trotskyists, and a few others.

The Trotskyists tried to base themselves on the Bolshevik Party, but there were and are many caricatures of Bolshevism in circulation. Today there is a sectarian quasi-Trotskyist notion that the Bolshevik party was a machine of obedience to the central leadership, with no democratic rights for its members.

In fact the Bolshevik party was a tremendously democratic party. Lenin was certainly the central leader, but he was often in the minority. He was repeatedly outvoted, challenged, and questioned. He had rival ideas to his own counterposed by loyal Bolshevik party members. The party was able to lead the democratic revolution in 1917 because it was itself democratic.

The Bolsheviks had a conception that

Bolsheviks

Lenin summed up in 1906: that there would be full democracy in the party in reaching decisions. Once a decision was reached and an action was agreed upon, discipline would take over. Even if people in the party disagreed with the decision they would carry out the action; but there was no question of forever curtailing discussion and having just one thinking element in the party.

Trotskyists believe that it is our duty to bring the lessons of the past to the working class now. That is fundamentally why we exist. We also recognise that we can learn from the working class, and from new working-class struggles and developments. That was one of the great strengths of the Bolsheviks.

Soviets first appeared in 1905, in a revolution that was crushed. The Bolsheviks initially were very suspicious of them. But the Bolsheviks quickly learned. They supported the soviets in 1905, and they were able to go into the soviets in 1917 and take the lead in a mass movement of workers who at first did not have a clear goal other than they wanted socialism in general.

They were able to go into the soviets and lead the workers — that is, propose clear ideas about what needed to be done, win the workers democratically in discussion and give a purpose and a guidance to the revolution. Otherwise the revolution would probably have been defeated.

Victor Serge was a Bolshevik, ex-anarchist who lived to write his memoirs. He wrote, in an article on "Lenin in 1917": "The Bolsheviks are the only ones to express unceasingly these obvious truths. They translate into crisp formulae and elevate to a theoretical understanding the deeply felt and precise feelings of the masses, and in the first place of the masses of combatants. What attracts them to Bolshevism is its precision". Without that precision they might have blundered into catastrophe and defeat.

In order to learn from the Bolsheviks you have to learn from the working class. You have to learn about the need for workers' democracy. You have to reject the idea that there is some individual, or three or five person committee, that has all knowledge and must be given all the power to think and all the initiative for action.

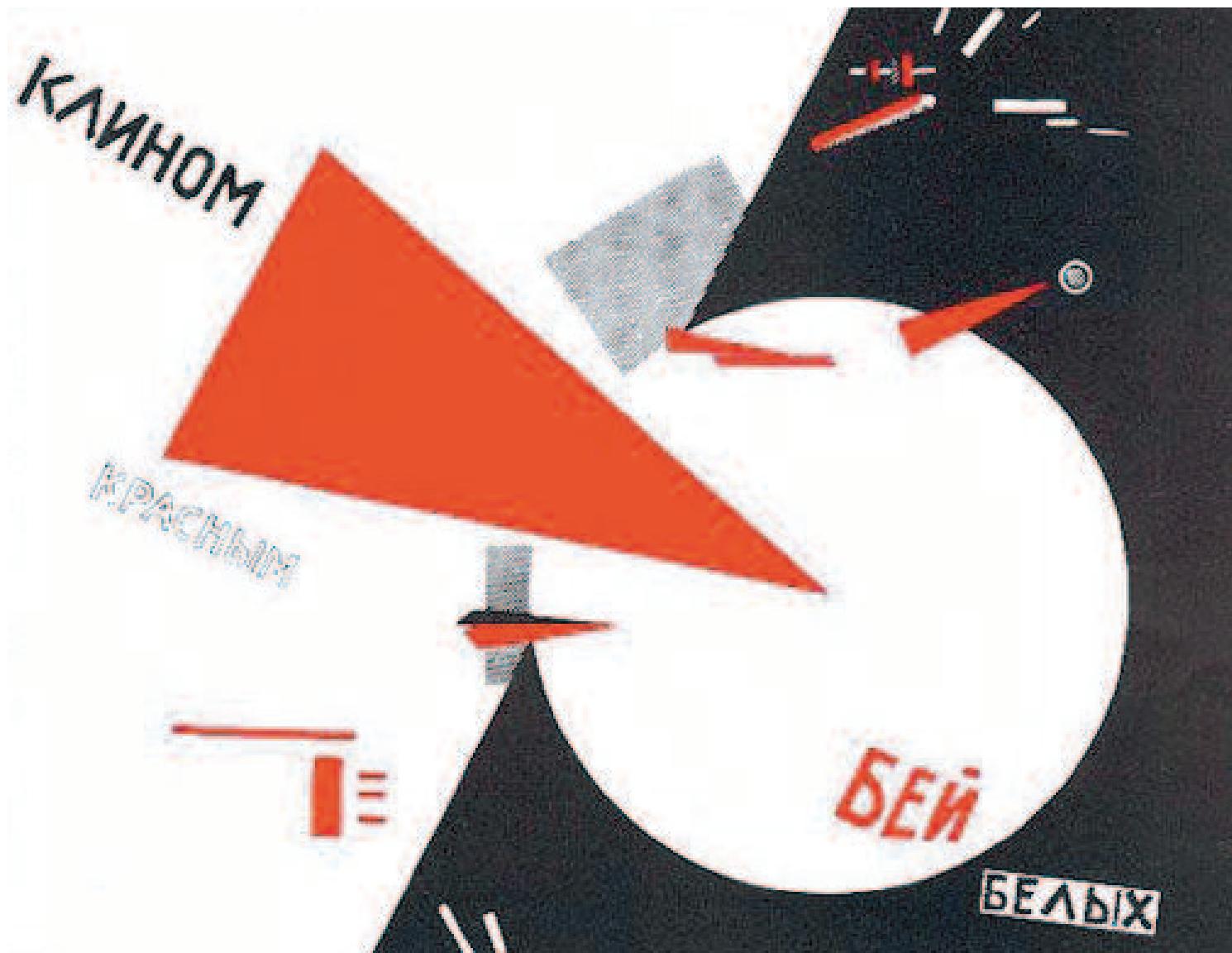
The implication of that is that they are never wrong, because there is no provision made for what to do if they are wrong, whether partly or completely. It is very like the Catholic Church!

Trotsky in 1938 in the Transitional Programme compared the bourgeoisies in Europe, the German and the Italian, who had made the fascists masters of the state, to a man going helter-skelter down hill on a toboggan, not knowing what will happen next.

Something like that is true of all bureaucratically-structured so-called Trotskyist parties. It has nothing in common with the Bolsheviks. They were a democratic party, who accepted discipline following discussion but could think for themselves and judge the party leaders and their proposals.

Why do we bother about the Russian revolution? This was the workers' revolution that succeeded. Before 1917 there had been a workers' revolution in Paris in 1871. The Paris Commune held power for nine weeks and was then crushed, with many thousands massacred.

The Bolsheviks took power and held it.



Trotsky reports a conversation with Lenin in late 1918, when Lenin expressed astonishment that the Bolshevik government had lasted longer than the Paris Commune.

Russia was the revolution that took place. It was the revolution where the workers succeeded in clarifying themselves, in acting and taking control. It was the revolution that can be a model for future revolutions.

Of course, the Bolsheviks lived in very different conditions from ours. But we can learn from them the need for clarity, the need for honesty.

HONEST

Read Lenin! Lenin is honest. He does not bluff. When he is retreating, he says so. He tells the truth. He set up a dialogue with the party members and with the working class.

The Bolsheviks were honest people, guided by Marxism. They took Marxism as the means of analysing the world around them. They took the results of that analysis seriously, and at the same time they learned from new experiences like the soviets. They gave themselves an account of what they were doing. They saw what they were doing in a historical perspective.

Rosa Luxemburg was highly critical of some things they did, but she said of the Bolsheviks that they had saved the honour of international socialism which had been betrayed in Germany. The Bolsheviks are a great model a model to learn from — modify maybe, but a model nonetheless. That is one reason why we celebrate the revolution.

The Bolsheviks were more democratic than anything that exists now. We have only bourgeois democracy. There are few restrictions on the franchise compared to the time of the Russian Revolution. But we have a plutocracy. Democracy blatantly under the thumb of the rich, most blatantly in the USA.

We also celebrate the revolution because we want to continue the revolution.

If you had asked the Bolsheviks who fought Stalinism what they were, they would answer that they were the Bolshevik-Leninists, the party of the Russian revolution. If you had asked the Trotskyists outside of Russia what they were doing, they would have said that they were the party of the Russian revolution.

We are the party of the Russian revolution! We are the party that understands what the revolution was, and that also understands that between Stalinism and Bolshevism there runs a river of blood — working-class and Bolshevik blood.

Or at least we try to be the party of the Russian Revolution. We honour the Bolsheviks and those who made the revolution. Bolshevism in politics was the fusion of Marxist science and tremendous working-class militancy and creativity.

The Corbyn surge, so-called, took us all by surprise. We didn't expect it. How did it come about? The Miliband Labour Party leadership created structures to appeal to what they thought would be passive supporters, but then, with the help of a series of accidents, including Corbyn getting onto the ballot for leader, there has been a tremendous transformation.

We have tried to help that transformation — or rather help the new members understand what politics is about, from antisemitism to the question of working-class direct action. There are tremendous possibilities available to us.

The state of the labour movement now is not just the result of the labour movement being not very lively. It is a result of tremendous defeats. We suffered tremendous defeats in the 1970s and 1980s. Before that there was an amazing militancy in Britain.

There were some two hundred factory occupations between 1971 and 1975. Workers wanted to change things, but they were not able to do so. They put in a Labour government in 1974. The Labour government sold

us out and created the way for Thatcherism. It made a counterrevolution against the working-class militancy. The state of the movement now is a result of those defeats.

Whenever it comes to discussing the Bolsheviks or the early Trotskyists, I remember an Irish republican song I learned as a child, in this song there is an old woman who is singing to herself about the revolutionaries of 50 or 60 years in the past, the Fenians, a left wing republican movement.

She is singing and mumbling and she says in one of the verses: "We may have great men but we'll never have better".

We will have great women and great men and great socialists in the future who will learn from Bolshevism, and they will succeed in doing more and doing it more permanently.

But when we think about the Bolsheviks, we say what the old woman in the song says: Glory o, Glory o to the Bolsheviks! Glory and honour to the Bolsheviks!

'Twas down by the Glenside I met an old woman
A plucking young nettles she ne'er saw me coming

I listened a while to the song she was humming
Glory o glory o to the Bold Fenian Men

'Tis fifty long years since I saw the moon beamin'
On strong manly forms, and on eyes with hope gleamin'

I see them again sure through all my sad dreamin'
Glory o glory o to the Bold Fenian Men

Some died by the glenside, some died mid the stranger
And wise men have told us their cause was a failure

But they stood by old Ireland and never feared danger
Glory o glory o to the Bold Fenian Men

I passed on my way, God be praised that I met her
Be life long or short I will never forget her

We may have great men but we'll never have better
Glory o glory o to the Bold Fenian Men

Racism, antisemitism and the left

Workers' Liberty has been debating theories of racism and their relationship to left antisemitism. This contribution by Carmen Basant. An alternative view will be published in the next issue.

In the history of racism, a key transformation occurred with the epistemological shift from religion to science as the standard criterion to measure and evaluate the apparent nature of the social and material world. Miles (1989: 20) explains the early origins of European racism:

"By the fifteenth century, the centre of economic and political power in Europe had consolidated in the emergent nation states of the north and west of the continent [...]. Trade, travel, and exploration were interdependent elements in an attempt by the feudal ruling classes to resolve a major economic crisis [...] and together, they widened the European contact with populations elsewhere in the world."

"This resulted in a major change in the structural context within which representations of the Other were generated and reproduced. Up to this point, the non-Islamic Other was beyond and outside the European arena. Moreover, in the case of the discourse about the Islamic Other, it was for a long time a representation generated in the context of European subordination to a greater economic and military power. But once the emergent European city and nation states began to expand [...], a system which was subsequently linked with colonial settlement, the populations they confronted in this exercise were within the arena of Europe in an economic and political sense, even though not spatially."

"And when colonisation became an objective, a class of Europeans began a new era of contact and interrelationship with indigenous populations, a contact that was increasingly structured by competition for land, the introduction of private property rights, the demand for labour force, and the perceived obligation of conversion to Christianity. Collectively, these were all embodied in the discourse of 'civilisation'."

From the late eighteenth century, with the secularisation of culture and the rising hegemony of science, a change in European representations of the Other took place, namely, "the emergence of the idea of 'race'" — "an idea that was taken up by scientific enquiry and increasingly attributed with a narrow and precise meaning":

"...Other became interpreted as a difference of 'race', that is, as a primarily biological and natural difference which was inherent and unalterable. Moreover, the supposed difference was presented as scientific (that is, objective) fact. This discourse of 'race' [...] became a component part of common-sense discourse at all levels of the class structure and a basic component of imperialist ideologies [...]." (Miles 1989: 30-31)

This scientific discourse of "race" did not simply replace earlier representations of the Other; rather, earlier ideas of "savagery, barbarism, and civilisation both predetermined the space that the idea of 'race' occupied but were then themselves reconstituted by it" (Miles 1989: 33).

Vis-à-vis anti-Jewish racism, the historical shift from Christian antisemitism (which was religious-based) to racial antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries effectively fused religion with the idea of "race" born from "racial" science. Miles observes that within Europe: "representations of the Other as an inferior 'race' focused, amongst others, on the Irish [...] and Jews. This was sustained

partly by claiming a biological superiority for the Nordic 'race'." Campaigns for immigration controls in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century focused on Jewish refugees from eastern Europe:

"...Jewishness was increasingly interpreted as a quality determined by blood, and therefore as hereditary and ineradicable. References to the existence of a Jewish 'race' became common. This 'race' was signified as an alien presence that had the potential to destroy civilised society through the promotion of an international conspiracy: consequently, the Jews became the racialised 'enemy within'" (Miles 1993: 135-136)

Within a wider economic and political crisis, it was in Nazi Germany "that the idea of the Jews as a degenerate, unproductive and criminal 'race', as simultaneously a 'race' of exploiters and revolutionaries [...]", evolved into a state policy and practice of genocide (Miles 1989: 59).

At the end of the Second World War the scientific establishment largely discredited the determining biological category of "race". Yet the idea of "race" survives and continues to evolve as an everyday common-sense discourse and as an ideological framework for making sense of the world and its social and material relations.

Between 1949 and 1953 the USSR officially endorsed anti-Zionism that was antisemitic. The period concluded in a series of show trials which demonised the alleged collaborators of Zionism as bourgeois, cosmopolitan, Trotskyist, and conspiratorial enemies of the state. Zionism was popularly depicted as the stalking horse of US and Western imperialism. Post-1967, another official anti-Zionism campaign began in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

ISRAEL

After the formation of the nation-state of Israel in 1948, general public opinion in the west, including on the left, regarded Israel as a civilised country amid "backward" states who deserved its annihilation.

As this opinion feared Israel's destruction in the escalation to the Arab-Israeli Six-day war of June 1967, pro-Israeli demonstrations took place in, for example, London, New York, and Paris (Rodinson 1968, 1983). At the same time while antisemitic anti-Zionism common currency in Stalinist Communist Parties worldwide, the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s (pioneered by a number of ex-Communist Party members) inherited this tendency as part of a general leftist, anti-imperialist, third worldist outlook. A turning point was the outcome of the 1967 war:

"The Israeli victory in the 1967 war and subsequent settlement of occupied Arab territories [...] brought the younger generation of Western Marxists, the Trotskyist or Maoist 'new left', to an extreme anti-Israeli position. Israel, which from 1967 also developed close relations with the US, was condemned as racist, the oppressor of the Palestinians and the main progenitor of imperialism and colonialism in the Middle East [...]." (Golan 2001: 129)

Miles (1989, 1993) argues much of the British and North American theorising about capitalism and racism since the 1960s acknowledges the immorality of the racism which culminated in the Holocaust, but:

"utilises a colonial model which has little scope to explain much of the European racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and certainly not that form of racism which others label antisemitism [...]; it does, however, have a relevance to the controversial debate about whether or not Zionism can be defined as an

instance of racism [...]. Consequently, we are offered definitions and theories of racism which are so specific to the history of overseas colonisation (that is, specific to the domination of 'white' over 'black' as so many writers express it) that they are of little value in explaining any other (non-colonial) context." (Miles 1989: 67-68)

Miles insists that an analysis of racism grounded solely in colonial history and which elevates the somatic characteristic of skin colour – such that racism is exclusively understood as a "white ideology" created to dominate "black people" – has "a specific and limited explanatory power" (Miles 1993: 148). Vis-à-vis the history of anti-Jewish (and antisemitic) racism in Europe, he explains:

"These instances demonstrate that, contrary to those who argue that 'being black' makes 'black' people especially vulnerable to racism in a 'white society', it is because visibility is always the outcome of a process of signification in a historical context that one can conclude that those who cannot be seen by virtue of their really existing phenotypical features are equally vulnerable to being racialized: their 'non-visibility' can be constructed by the racist imagination as the proof of their 'real' and 'essential' (but 'concealed') difference, which is then signified by a socially imposed mark (as in the example of the Nazi requirement that Jews wear a yellow Star of David [...])." (Miles 1993: 13-14)

COLONIAL

The colonial model of racism, as prevalent in US and British academia (and indeed on the wider political left), is not able to explain the combination of events, circumstances, and social relations in which certain populations have been racialised and excluded without being colonised.

This model offers intellectual credibility to the ahistorical notion of "Zionist racism": of rich, colonial, white Jews oppressing poor, anti-colonial, brown Arabs.

In contrast, Miles (1993: 21) focuses on:

"the articulation between the capitalist mode of production and the nation state, rather than between capitalism and colonialism, because [...] this maps the primary set of social relations within which racism had its origins and initial effects. Colonialism was an integral moment of this articulation, but racism was not an exclusive product of colonialism [...]."

Miles (1993: 61-62) recognises the concurrent development of racism and nationalism, and their potential overlap.

"The extension of capitalist relations of production increased the circulation of commodities and of people, and this increasing mobility, migration and social interaction provided part of the foundation upon which the ideologies of racism and nationalism were constructed. The increasing profusion of physiological and cultural variation, as recognised in western Europe, became the object of intellectual curiosity and, thereby, of the theoretical practice of scientists and philosophers. But it also became the focus of political attention and action [...]."

Operating in and through a mainstream current of leftist understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a particular ideological form of anti-Jewish racism which works to both "fix" and "make sense" of this conflict.

An anti-Jewish racism has roots in the Stalinist left and New Left and in the more general history of racism. It is compounded by the legacy of US and British academia's colonial model of racism. These leftists argue that it is necessary for individual Jews to break from "them" and assimilate to "us" by be-

coming anti-Zionists who vocally denounce the existence of Israel. Indeed, the left's promotion of certain individual Jews who have done just this is held up as proof of the left's tolerance and acceptance of Jews. And yet it is with critical qualification. Indeed, the evolving nature of racism has led to many instances in which its discourse accommodates the Other through a deemed necessary process of assimilation.

With racism in general, real and imagined somatic and/or cultural characteristics have historically been and continue to be signified as an innate mark of "race". Indeed, there are historical instances in which representations of the Other have been based exclusively on cultural characteristics, notably, "European representations of the Islamic world", which "extensively utilised images of barbarism and sexuality in the context of a Christian/heathen dichotomy" (Miles 1989: 40). Likewise, with contemporary left anti-Jewish racism it is not difference *per se* that matters but the identification of this difference as significant (Miles 1989).

DIFFERENCE

The difference that racism signifies is related to what we might understand as ethnicity: to common geography, familial heritage, and socio-cultural constitution, such as language, food, and clothing.

Contemporary left anti-Jewish racism marks out a group of people in relation to Israeli/Zionist Jewishness – and assigns this categorised group of bodies with negative characteristics and as giving rise to negative consequences. This Jewish Other is generalised with a singular and static understanding of Israel and Zionism: that this Jewish collective has uniquely world domineering and tyrannical power.

The leftist demand (often implicit) that the Israeli Jewish nation-state must be undone because it is uniquely despotic (comparable only to fascist Germany and/or apartheid South Africa) – a judgement and a demand not made of any other nation-state worldwide now or in history – is racist. Real and imagined cultural characteristics have been and are signified as an innate mark of the nature of Israel and Zionism (and of the cultural "race" of Jews associated with Israel and Zionism), which are deemed especially deplorable and negative in characteristics and consequences.

Furthermore, the logic underpinning the leftist demand to boycott Israeli academia is an unprecedented denial and writing-off of any progressive role for the Israeli-Jewish working class now or in the future.

This is racist since this working class is singled out and solidified like none of that is especially wretched and negative in characteristics and consequences.

• Abridged. Full text here: bit.ly/hsYdmt

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Free speech on campus, and argue the issues!

PLATFORM

By Reuben Mathews

When we “no platform” and un-invite radical feminists from our universities — in the guise of safer spaces — who are we protecting, and who are we serving?

The more time and energy we spend attacking these women, the less we spend fighting the Tories and the straight identified men currently posing a life-threatening threat to trans people on these campuses.

We should be focussing our energy on the material conditions and accompanying attitudes that pose a threat to the lives of trans people, and on convincing other people to recognise, challenge, and respond to them.

The 2017 Stonewall School Report showed that 80% of trans young people in the UK have self-harmed, and almost half have attempted suicide. These figures are replicated in the 2012 Trans Mental Health Study, in which 66% have accessed mental health services for reasons other than access to medical assistance in gender reassignment, and 48% had attempted suicide.

Furthermore 58% of trans people are disabled, and 18% are carers. Of those trans people who have attended gender identity clinics, 32% faced a 1-3 year wait, and 8% wait over 3 years for an appointment. 58% of participants felt that the wait to access a Gender Identity Clinic led to their mental health or emotional wellbeing worsening during this time.

Poet poisoned by Pinochet

By John Cunningham

Chilean poet Pablo Neruda may have been murdered by the Pinochet dictatorship.

Recent autopsies suggest that the death of the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in 1973 was possibly caused by poisoning. This should surprise no-one even moderately acquainted with the dictatorship of General Pinochet. Neruda, arguably South America's greatest poet and a staunch champion of the oppressed, was admitted to hospital at the time of Pinochet's military coup which overthrew the left social-democratic government of Salvador Allende elected in 1971.

12 days later Neruda died of a heart attack — at least that was the official version. There have been rumours for many years that he was poisoned by agents of the Pinochet regime. It is well-known that the Mexican government had offered Neruda asylum and even had a plane waiting for him at a nearby airport.

Neruda, the son of a railway worker, was born in 1904 and his first poem was published when he was only 13. In the mid-1930s he was forced to flee Chile after his vocal opposition to US exploitation of the Chilean economy. Ending up in Spain he joined the Republican movement returning to Chile only in 1943. He became a member of the Chilean Communist Party in 1945 but four years later he was again in disfavour with the authorities and he, once more, went into exile, returning in 1959.

Ignoring the orders of Pinochet thousands turned out for his funeral in what was the first public display of opposition to the dic-

The three primary threats to the wellbeing of trans people in the UK are: the delays in accessing Gender Identity Clinics due to long waiting lists and underfunded services; the cuts to mental health services that have increased waiting lists and decreased available support; and the cuts to the disability benefits and welfare systems on which many trans people rely. All of these are the fault and responsibility of the Conservative government, and hence within their purview to fix if they wish.

These dangers to the lives and wellbeing of trans people, including university students, have not been responded to with a wholesale banning of the Conservative society on campus, an attempt to shut down all their meetings through protest, no-platform motions for all Conservative speakers, and a refusal to allow them to be a registered student society. To the contrary, they organise openly on campus, with protests only for occasional, very high profile speakers. Why do we not ban them from meeting, when they are far more of a threat to our survival than “TERFs” (“Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists”)?

A quick google for “transgender suicide uk” gave, on the first page of results, 3 suicides since April 2017 — and there will be far more I missed. In order to mitigate the risk of suicide, trans people need access to proper mental health care, benefits, and short waiting lists — and it is a deeply ideological decision the Tory party have made in not providing these. Why are we making radical feminists, who have the odd newspaper column but no institutional power, our primary



enemy, rather than the government whose policies are contributing to the death of countless trans people? World-wide, the biggest cause of the murders of trans people is straight identified men — yet there is no movement towards banning them from our unions. Similarly, reasonably prominent members of many organised religions (including Christianity, Judaism and Islam) are known for preaching against trans people in a manner that could be seen to justify our murders, and yet we don't ban all religious societies from campus.

Banning radical feminists is easy, and the protests organised against them promote community cohesion among left wing groups, giving “allies” a chance to prove their “ally credentials” by shouting at the “TERFs”. However, this does little to protect trans students, because it ignores the far more serious threats to our lives. Conservatives, straight men, and religious groups are welcome to meet on our campuses, in our communities, and in our Students' Unions, and there is minimal or no effort to ban or no-platform them to protect trans students.

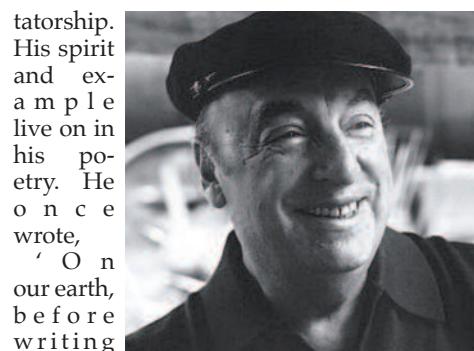
Advocating institutionally banning all religious societies, all Conservative societies, and all straight men would be impractical, impossible, and inappropriate; whilst all of

these groups contribute to the deaths of trans people on a national or international scale, banning them from meeting would be a chilling threat to the culture of free thought and debate that Universities were designed to foster. No space with Conservatives in is a safe space for trans people — but the only way of making spaces safe for us is by changing minds and through that, policy.

For as long as we refuse to argue with “TERFs” on our platforms, the more they will complain from their big media platforms, without us debating them, exposing the flaws in their positions, and changing the minds of their audiences. If we want to win the student body round to supporting the rights of trans people, we need to convince them our arguments are better than those of TERFs, Tories, and anyone else's.

Therefore, publicly taking apart the arguments our opponents make about trans people is critically important — not to change their minds, but to change the minds of people who might agree with them.

This is the only way of actively improving the lives of trans people in the future — convincing everyone that our rights must be supported, protected, and extended.



tatorship. His spirit and example live on in his poetry. He once wrote, ‘On our earth, before writing was invented, before the printing press was invented, poetry flourished. That is why we know that poetry is like bread; it should be shared by all, by scholars and by peasants, by all our vast, incredible, extraordinary family of humanity.’

An excellent introduction to his poetry is *The Essential Neruda* published by Bloodaxe (in a Spanish/English bi-lingual edition). To give readers a flavour of his verse here are a few lines from my favourite Neruda poem, ‘El pueblo/The people’,

*I think that those who made so many things
Ought to be the owners of everything.
That those who make bread ought to eat.*

*That those in the mine should have light.
Enough now of grey men in chains!
Enough of the pale souls who have disappeared!
Not another man should pass except as ruler.
Not one woman without her diadem.
Gloves of gold for every hand.*

Fruits of the sun for all the shadowy ones!

Why is the left in disarray?

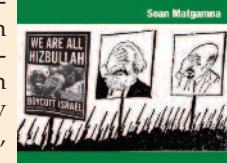
With the Corbyn surge, the Sanders movement, and more, there is new life on the left. But the left's positive political ideas, slogans, arguments are still paler than the right's.

After decades of Stalinist domination and infection, and then of retreats, the left needs rigorous debate to renew itself. It argues through two issues in particular: the endorsement by much of the left of political Islam as a progressive “anti-imperialism”; and the spread within the left of an “absolute anti-Zionism”, unwittingly informed by decades of Stalinist “anti-Zionist” campaigning after about 1949, which becomes effectively antisemitic.

The book concludes by criticising also the mechanical inverse on the left of the addled “anti-war” and “anti-imperialist” negativists: those who respond by going for an idealised bourgeois democracy.

£14.80 including postage

The left in disarray



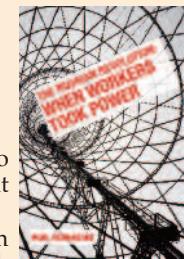
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The 1917 Russian revolution was the greatest event in political history so far — the first time working-class people took political power and held it for several years. Yet the real history is buried under myths.

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- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

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Events

Friday 17 November

Decoding capitalism: 150 years of Marx's Capital
7.30pm, Room 675, Institute of Education, London WC1H 0AL
bit.ly/NovForum

Monday 20 November

Is the Russian revolution something to celebrate?
6.30pm, The Packhorse Pub, 208 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX
bit.ly/2zob0R7

Saturday 18 November

Shut Down Yarl's Wood Demonstration
12noon, Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, Bedford MK44 1FD
bit.ly/2j6DQzp

Saturday 18 November

A cellarful of solidarity
7pm, The Betsey Trotwood, 56 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3BL
bit.ly/2yEsObG

Tuesday 21 November

Sack the Tories — budget day protest
6pm, Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
bit.ly/2ifZ6iT

9-10 December

NCAFC winter conference
Liverpool Guild of Students
bit.ly/2zoUNv3

Have an event you want listing? Email:
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Scottish Labour at a crossroads

LABOUR

By Dale Street

The result of the contest for leadership of the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) will be announced on Saturday, 18 November.

At the core of that contest has been a struggle by the rank-and-file of the Scottish Labour Party and affiliated trade unions in Scotland to liberate the Scottish labour movement from the grip of a right-wing old-guard establishment.

Richard Leonard secured 42 nominations from Constituency Labour Parties (Anas Sarwar got 16), ten nominations from trade unions (Sarwar got one), and the backing of all affiliated socialist societies which made nominations. He won support from all sections of the individual membership of the Labour Party. The bedrock of his support is younger and newer members.

The SLP has been in steady decline since the first Holyrood elections in 1999. In the 2011 Holyrood elections the SNP won an absolute majority of seats; this, in an electoral system designed to prevent

any party from doing so. In the 2015 general election the SLP lost 40 of its 41 Westminster seats.

In the 2014 referendum the SLP establishment opted for collaboration with the Tories in the "Better Together" campaign. This, they claimed, was the way to beat the SNP — while support for independence doubled and support for Labour collapsed. Even the much-vaunted SLP resurgence in this year's general election amounted to an increase of just 10,000 votes in the whole of Scotland

CAREER

Anas Sarwar continues that tradition — that of a typical career politician, with politics reduced to empty soundbites.

He claimed that he was the "unity candidate". In fact his campaign has been a rallying point for the most right-wing and viscerally anti-Corbyn elements in the SLP.

Sarwar promised to stand up "For the Many, Not the Few". But the Sarwar family firm does not recognise a trade union or pay its employees the living wage. For thirteen years Sarwar himself was paid an annual £20,000 dividend on his shares in the company.

The contrast between Leonard's

promise of change of Sarwar's promise of business-as-usual was not the only contrast to surface in the campaign.

In 2013 Unite members in the Falkirk Westminster constituency were falsely accused of signing up paper members in order to ensure the candidate backed by Unite was selected to be its next Westminster candidate. The media whipped up a hysterical witch-hunt. The Labour Party leadership willingly joined in. Ineos seized the opportunity to hound or sack Unite activists out of their jobs at the nearby Grangemouth plant.

But in this election campaign there has been little or no interest in concerns raised by CLP secretaries, backed up by hard evidence, of repeated cases of multiple applications for Labour Party membership all sharing the same e-mail address and mobile phone number, especially in Glasgow CLPs.

The nominations are a statement of support for Leonard by the labour movement.

A victory for Leonard will be a victory for the labour movement.

• Abridged. Longer version at bit.ly/2zHLRiu

How "slow burn" worked for the CWU

By Gregor Gall*

The Communication Workers' Union (CWU) in the Royal Mail ballot has set the gold standard for all other major unions in the UK.

It was the first nationwide strike ballot since the Trade Union Act 2016, which came fully into force in March 2017, and dictates that lawful strike action now requires a 50% turnout to vote. CWU gained a 89% vote to go ahead on a 74% turnout.

The CWU began the mobilisation to gain a strike mandate well over six months ago. It put together a "Four Pillars of Security" campaign, calling for: decent pensions; a shorter working week; extended legal protections, and a proper pricing policy for the cost of sending mail. The campaign focused on ensuring members' terms and conditions of employment were not driven down, amid fears they would be in order to help the now-private company retain its market share and boost profitability.

Lesson one is to pick an issue — or set of issues — that really matter to members. Asking members to strike for, say, a little more than a 1% pay rise might not provide much motivation when the cost of striking could wipe away the benefits of such a small rise and their pay has fallen by up to 10% over the last decade (as has been the case in the public sector).

Lesson two involves gradually upping the ante among members.

CWU initially ran a petition among members to build support and meetings of workplace reps. Then there were countless bulletins to members and umpteen video messages. All before the ballot. Then followed "the largest online union meeting in recent times" and hundreds of workplace gate meetings where members gathered en masse outside their delivery and sorting offices.

So it was a slow burn strategy, rather than a quick flash in the pan campaign. It was patient, methodical and well planned. Other unions cannot expect to pass the new thresholds unless they act similarly.

These lessons are vital following

Comment by Gemma Short

I think Gregor's explanation of the "slow burn" strategy in the CWU Royal Mail ballot is interesting, and probably correct. However I think it is wrong to suggest there is a similar "slow burn" strategy in other unions, particularly the PCS.

There are two types of "slow burn", the one clearly leading members somewhere, and the one without a plan. Whilst the PCS adopted some of the strategies of the CWU in its recent consultative ballot on pay, such as gate-line photos and use of social media, which no doubt contributed to achieving 49% turnout, they cannot completely compensate for other missing factors.

this year's TUC congress where a number of unions, including PCS, signalled they want to hold a joint national strike to beat the public sector pay cap. Indeed, PCS seems to be taking the same course as the CWU in its slow, patient pre-ballot mobilisation of members across the country, highlighting the issue over the summer. Whether the other big unions (like GMB, Unison and Unite) will do the same remains to be seen.

* Gregor Gall is a professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford. Abridged from: bit.ly/2zzwYKx

The PCS pay target of 5% is not really much above the 1% cap, and has stayed the same for a while. Reps have been told they won't be given a breakdown of the turnout so they can work on weaker areas. PCS has not announced (and apparently the leadership are opposed to) an immediate statutory ballot. So where is this going? Energy mobilised around an indicative ballot may be left to dissipate, with members confused if they are eventually balloted thinking they have already voted and/or wondering what happened after the last vote.

Whilst the two approaches can look similar from social media output, I think they are likely to be very different in reality.

Rotten Southern rail deal

By a rail worker

Members of train drivers' union Aslef working for GTR Southern voted to accept the deal recommended by their leadership to settle their long-running dispute over Driver Only Operation.

The headline pay increase looks impressive at first — 28.5% over five years, with a minimum of a 2.5% increase (or more if RPI is higher than 2.5%) in the last year of the deal, bringing the basic pay to a big-sounding £63k. However, even working on a very conservative assumption that the union secures RPI-level increases over that period, and that RPI runs at an average of 3%, the element of the deal that compensates the drivers for taking on the train dispatch and other safety responsibilities of the guards is only around £5-6k per year after five years.

That is precious little in order to sell out a whole grade of workers and assume their responsibilities, especially in a recent climate where traincrew are relatively frequently being dragged into court and blamed for accidents that occur during train dispatch.

The two worst things about the deal are firstly that it accepts the idea of "exceptional circumstances" where a train that is scheduled to carry an On Board Supervisor can run without one. This was a feature of the two previous proposed settlements, both of which were rejected by Aslef members when put to a vote. Secondly, the responsibility for policing the application of these exceptional circumstances will fall on individual drivers. This effectively places RMT members' industrial strength (their ability to stop the running of trains by withdrawing their labour) at the mercy of another grade of workers, most of whom belong to a separate union.

That this deal should have been put to the vote at all might seem surprising. After all, a previous attempt by GTR Southern to resolve the DOO dispute by attaching the capitulation to a tempting pay in-



Labour MP Louise Haigh on the Northern picket line in Sheffield

crease resulted in a new dispute and new industrial action ballot over pay running alongside the DOO issue. There was much public outrage from the union's leaders that the company had attempted to link the settlements of these separate disputes as a way of bribing drivers to settle for DOO, so it could seem strange that they have u-turned on this now.

SETTLE

But it is something of an open secret that Aslef had been desperate to settle.

Southern had offered to write off around half a million pounds in legal costs owed to them by the union and withdraw the threat of further action in the Supreme Court, where there would be no ceiling on costs that could be awarded against Aslef if they were to lose. Aslef has only 20,000 members, and those costs could have crippled it financially or even bankrupted it.

The Aslef leadership will attempt to justify this sellout by pointing to this existential threat and saying that this settlement was necessary to save the union. However, this

does not stand up for two reasons.

First that there has been no attempt to turn outwards to the rest of the labour movement and appeal for help in the face of an attempt by a Tory government, through its proxy Southern, to financially destroy a trade union.

Second, a union exists to defend and advance the pay and conditions of its members. When the only options available are to fight or to fail those members (and members of other trade unions) so spectacularly, the only honourable choice is to fight, despite the grave risk. The Aslef leaders spent most of their time during this dispute shut away in secret negotiations with the company, not heeding repeated calls for further action from their own members or changing course when those members twice rejected their proposed settlements.

This turn of events is demoralising, if not entirely surprising. RMT remains in dispute over DOO at Southern as well as on South West Railway, Greater Anglia, Northern and Merseyrail.

It is now vital that a support movement grows up around these disputes, to sustain RMT and to draw Aslef into action.

From Tubeworker bulletin

Transport for London has announced a plan to cut 1,400 jobs as part of its "transformation" programme, a bid to save up to £5 billion as the Tories slash TfL's central government subsidy.

These jobs will come from engineering, admin, managerial, and other departments.

Unions must resist this cuts onslaught. Any job lost will be a setback, as it accepts the principle that cutting staff — whatever their

grade or department — is the first option for making "savings" rather than, for example, trimming senior management pay, or actually fighting the government on the question of the subsidy.

A genuinely radical Labour administration in City Hall would not be taking the cuts lying down. It would be telling the Tories that it does not accept the reduction in the subsidy, and publicly declaring that it will support any and all union action against the cuts. In the past, radical Labour councils such as

Poplar in the 1920s and Clay Cross in the 1970s have taken on Tory governments by refusing to pass on central government cuts to local people by cutting services or increasing council rents.

Our unions should be demanding a similar stance from Sadiq Khan and the GLA.

In the meantime, we need to get organised across the job, particularly in immediately affected areas, to build for industrial action to resist the cuts.

PCS: time to ballot!

From PCS Independent Left

The 49% turnout in PCS's consultative pay ballot is an enormous tribute to the hard work of activists and many officers. It shows what can be done.

That said, whilst in principle the result is a mandate for action, we must not forget that PCS achieved less than the 50% turnout that it would need to secure a lawful ballot result (as defined by the Tories regressive anti-union legislation). This despite the fact that easier methods of voting (including electronic voting) were used that would not be permissible under current legislation in an industrial action ballot. From what we understand, electronic voting was crucial to the turnout figure.

We believe that the PCS leadership needs to learn from the CWU ballot and from their own many past failures to build sufficient



membership support.

It has plentiful data from the consultative ballot to determine which areas delivered the vote and which did not. Therefore it should know where we are weak.

To put the union on a war footing and so to win the legal ballot, we urge the leadership to prepare the ballot carefully and not lose momentum over the Christmas period .

• For full article and recommendations for next steps see: bit.ly/2AJsxBJ

Uber loses tribunal appeal

By Gemma Short

On Friday 10 November Uber lost its appeal against an employment tribunal ruling that its drivers should be classed as workers, with all the associated rights of workers including that of the minimum wage.

Uber claims its drivers are self-employed, and says it will appeal again, meaning the case may end up in the Supreme Court.

However as Jason Moyer-Lee of the IWGB (one of the unions involved in the case) explained in the *Guardian*: "the employment tribunal challenges have not been about whether or not the workers in ques-

tion were self-employed. For as the supreme court has made clear, and as has been repeated ad nauseam by lower courts and tribunals, the law recognises two types of self-employed people. The first type are micro-entrepreneurs or professionals contracting with clients or customers. The second type — known as Limb (b) workers — carry out their work as part of someone else's business rather than their own, and as such are entitled to a number of employment rights such as holidays, minimum wage and pensions contributions."

A win over Uber may be close, but is still quite far off for workers in a variety of other courier and private hire companies.

Bring UoL workers in-house!

By Gemma Short

Outsourced workers at the University of London will strike on Tuesday 21 November in their campaign to be brought back in-house and get in-house terms and conditions.

The workers, who are cleaners, security officers, receptionists porters and post room workers, are organised by the IWGB union.

The union is campaigning for all

workers to be taken back in-house, for all zero-hour contract workers to be given permanent contracts, and for a promised pay rise for security officers, receptionists porters and post room workers.

Workers will strike from 2pm on Tuesday 21 November, and hold a demo at University of London Senate House at 6pm.

• Follow the campaign at: facebook.com/uolbackinhouse

Arriva bus strike continues

By Peggy Carter

Drivers and engineers on buses operated by Arriva North West will strike again for nine days.

The workers, members of Unite, work on buses in the Liverpool, Merseyside, Manchester, Lan-

cashire or Cheshire. They are fighting for a pay rise and for differentials in pay between garages to be addressed by levelling up pay.

Workers will strike on 20 and 27 November, and 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22 and 23 December.



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After South Africa, our turn: Scrap student fees!

By Chris Reynolds

After Germany in 2014, South Africa looks like becoming the next country to scrap university tuition fees.

And more and more people are determined to add England and Wales to the list.

In a video released to support a student demonstration in London for free education on 15 November, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has said: "Everybody should have access to high quality from the cradle to the grave, without being forced into debt and anxiety. No one should be shut out.

That's why I support the demonstration for free education organised by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts [NCAFC]. And Labour in government will deliver it" (bit.ly/jc-fe).

Through a shift in opinion in recent years, even more conservative sections of the National Union Students have come to support free education on paper, but the 15 November demonstration has not been backed by the NUS central leadership.

It has been down to NCAFC, a grass-roots network dating back to the 2010 protests against the Tories' big increases in student fees,

to organise the 15 November march. More than 60 student unions across the country have mobilised for it, from as far away as Bangor and Falmouth.

Even Scottish students, from Aberdeen for example, have mobilised for it, though Scottish universities do not charge fees to Scottish students. The 15 November protest has also called for living grants for all, a halt to campus cuts, and heavier taxation of the rich to fund those changes.

Hansika Jethnani, an NCAFC organiser, says: "We refuse to lie down in the face of the government's relentless attacks on educa-



tion. Tuition fees are fundamentally illegitimate – education is a public good, not a product, and it should be funded by progressive taxation on the rich. The orthodoxy that students can be charged more and more has been shattered."

The Tory government is under heavy pressure on the issue, but—beset by budget worries because of its Brexit plans, and obviously unwilling to tax the rich—has shifted only a few millimetres.

It has promised to increase the income threshold above which students start repaying from £21,000 a year from £25,000 from April 2018. It will leave the maximum fee from September 2018 at £9,250, rather than raising it to £9,500 as previously planned. That measure's immediate effect is likely to be fierce cuts across campuses as university bosses try to compensate for their £250 per student loss without cutting their

own salaries, which range up to £451,000 for Bath University's Glynnis Breakwell.

The rumoured move to scrap fees in South Africa is a bid to prop up his crumbling support by president Jacob Zuma. It is tied with Zuma sacking his higher education minister, Blade Nzimande, leader of the South African Communist Party, who says that the fee-scraping is "unworkable". The SACP, a major force within the ruling African National Congress, has been at odds with Zuma on other issues.

Zuma had previously been increasing fees, but backed down from that in 2015 after weeks of student protests culminated in a mass demonstration outside the seat of government in Pretoria.

• NCAFC has a day of action on campuses on 29 November, and a winter conference on 9-10 December. Details: anticuts.com

The rent is too damn high!

By a Surrey student

Students at the University of Surrey have now joined the nation-wide campaign to lower rents on campuses.

Surrey, Cut the Rent demands cutting and capping rent to £100 per week as well as the creation of a new accommodation bursary by the University.

Despite Surrey claiming to be one of the cheapest universities in the UK, students here pay as much as 80% of their loans on accommodation, presumably helping pay for the VC's £300k salary, chauffeur driven cars and first class flights.

Rents continue to increase above inflation and the cheaper (but already expensive) accommodation is being demolished to make way for new luxury rooms.

Campaign founder Jake Roberts said: "we think that's fundamentally unjust." The campaign is preparing for a possible rent strike early next year.

But this isn't just a problem facing Surrey. Other "Cut the Rent" campaigns that have been organised across the country, including "UCL Cut the Rent", who, following multiple rent strikes and demonstrations, forced their university to freeze rents, reduce rents for the cheapest 30% of UCL's accommodation, and in-

crease UCL's accommodation bursary for students from low income backgrounds by £350,000.

Students at Sussex brought down the rent in some buildings. Bristol's accommodation failed fire tests after Grenfell. In Bath, despite a £3.5m surplus, students are complaining of faulty and dangerous appliances.

We need democratically run campuses, controlled by students and staff, and rents at a level that works for all of us, without any of our money going to line the pockets of the people at the top.

This struggle should also link up with the wider fight for lower rents nationwide and for a massive house building project.

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Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB (60-83-01)

Amount: £.....

To be paid on the day of (month) 20.... (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing.

This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date Signature

Contact us

020 7394 8923

 solidarity@workersliberty.org

 Write to us: The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

Solidarity editorial: Michael Elms, Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent (editor), Gemma Short, and Martin Thomas

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